

Amendments to the Specification:

Amend the paragraph that appears at page 3, lines 3-20, of the specification as follows:

In accordance with the invention, a “throttle” is set which specifies the proportion of users to which a new feature is to be deployed. For example, the throttle may be set to 10%, indicating that the new feature should be deployed to 10% of all users. Each user of the product to which the new feature relates has an identifier associated therewith. For example, in the case where the product incorporating the new features is the Microsoft Network (“MSN”) web site at ~~www.msn.com~~, each client (i.e., each “browser” program) that contacts the MSN web site has a globally unique identifier (“GUID”) associated therewith which is uploaded to the web site at the time the web site is contacted. Whether the new feature is deployed to a particular client is determined based on the GUID and the value of the throttle. If the throttle is set at 10%, then 10% of all GUIDs are selected to receive the new feature. The selection of GUIDs (or other user identifiers) is performed in such a manner that an increase in the throttle selects additional users to receive the new feature without de-selecting those users who had been selected at lower throttle levels. For example, if the throttle is adjusted from 10% to 11%, all users who were selected at the 10% category remain selected at the 11% category. One way to perform the selection is to compute a hash value of a portion of the GUID, and to use the throttle as a “cutoff,” whereby clients receive the new feature only when the hashed GUID is less than the throttle value.